



Relief For Disabled Liberian Children



Photo: USAID/World Food Program

Children at a disabled clinic on the outskirts of Monrovia, Liberia can now eat thanks to food provided by USAID.

When Sao Setuah's family fled from Sierra Leone's brutal rebels in 1998, the wheelchair-bound boy then eight-years-old, was left behind. Setuah's wide, easy grin is as crooked as his legs, injured during infancy due to circumstances of which he knows little. After his family was forced to flee without him, a priest brought him to a Liberian clinic run by an American Catholic nun called Our Lady of Fatima Centre. The Centre teaches skills and self-respect to 300 disabled Africans.

Five years later, Liberia's civil war raged around them and the Centre's lifeline to humanitarian aid was severed. Setuah found himself between bullets again, one of thousands cowering in a Liberian centre for the disabled. In 2003, fighting between rebel and government forces engulfed the compound as insurgents swept toward Liberia's capital of Monrovia. With the arrival of Nigerian peacekeeping troops in 2003, the World Food Program was able to distribute Title II food aid to the people in Monrovia - including Sao Setuah.

Until that time, no cooking oil, sugar or protein-rich foods were available, as warehouses had been heavily looted during the fighting. But with the arrival of peacekeeping troops just inside the Centre's gates, thousands lined up for what was for many their first real food in weeks. The disabled children can eat thanks to twenty-five metric tons of cornmeal delivered by USAID. Handicapped children like Sao Setuah play again and can be seen with checker boards perched on wheelchair armrests.

Photo & Caption

